

Washington, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed by a vote of 397-25, Congressman Joe Sestak's (PA-07) Elder Abuse Victims Act (HR 448).

"Everyday, too many of our nation's seniors become victim to physical, emotional, financial, or other abuse," said Congressman Sestak. "This legislation recognizes the limitations on our country's approach to elder abuse prosecution and rehabilitation and puts in place a system to assess and effectively respond to these deficiencies."

Congressman Sestak originally introduced the Elder Abuse Victims Act in the 110th session. It is now the first bill to pass the House of Representatives in 17 years on elder abuse. The legislation focuses on protecting seniors from abuse by evaluating state and federal programs, advocacy grants, and prosecution of elder abuse cases. Notably, it funds elder abuse prosecutorial departments at the local, state and federal levels; trains law enforcement officials on appropriate action in these cases; funds nurse-investigators who are experts in identifying elder abuse; and requires the Attorney General to conduct a study evaluating state programs and practices designed to protect seniors from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Specifically, the Elder Abuse Victims Act will:

- Require the Attorney General to conduct a study evaluating state laws and practices designed to protect seniors from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Within two years following enactment, require that the study be submitted to the Committee on Aging and the Speaker/Minority Leader of the House, in which they will: 1) describe and analyze state laws and practices designed to protect seniors from elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation by evaluating state laws to ensure that cases of abuse will be reported and the reporter will not suffer retribution; 2) provide recommendations on the need for more effective laws; and, 3) recommend additions or revisions to the official definition of terms used to protect seniors from abuse and enforce laws to punish violators.
- Task the Attorney General with the responsibility of establishing a plan for elder justice programs and activities throughout the country.

Elder Abuse Victims' Advocacy Grant

- Propose funding entities that specialize in the needs of elder abuse victims. Health care, social and protective service providers, among others, will be eligible for the Elder Abuse Victims' Advocacy Grant.

### Elder Justice Prosecutorial Department Funding

- Fund the creation of the Center for the Prosecution of Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation by the American Prosecutor Research Institute of the National District Attorneys Association.
- Fund the creation of either elder justice prosecution positions or the creation of a position to coordinate elder justice-related cases. It will include training, technical assistance, and policy development for state prosecutors.
- Fund additional staff who will focus on elder abuse cases, an elder abuse “resource group” through the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, nurse-investigators and other experts to assist in prosecution.

### Support Law Enforcement in Elder Abuse Matters

- Fund training of law enforcement officials on the important factors involved in elder abuse cases.

The number of elder abuse cases is on the rise across the country. According to estimates by the National Research Council Panel to Review Risk and Prevalence of Elder Abuse, between 1 million and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been victims of elder abuse. These are uncertain estimates because definitions of elder abuse vary widely from state to state and there are many imperfections in our national effort to adequately prevent, prosecute, and rehabilitate victims of this type of abuse.

“I believe that this legislation will advance the way we prosecute perpetrators of elder abuse and protect its vulnerable victims,” stated Congressman Sestak. “It will require a comprehensive review and study of state elder justice systems, including definitions of abuse, and it will do more to improve the prosecution and enforcement of elder justice cases.”

Since being elected to office, Congressman Sestak has worked hard to establish oversight for elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. He was a leading advocate and co-sponsor of the Elder Justice Act, which proposed the allocation of funds for state and local adult protective services to investigate reports of elder abuse and work with congressional committees to establish a national nurse aide registry. In addition, the Elder Justice Act (not to be confused with the Elder Abuse Victims Act) proposed grant creation for the establishment of stationary and mobile forensic centers, development of forensic expertise, and the provision of services for victims of elder neglect and exploitation. Additionally, the Elder Justice Act would provide incentives for individuals to receive training in providing better direct care in a long-term care facility.

Congressman Sestak visits senior groups and centers across the District nearly every weekend and has spoken to numerous senior groups on a variety of issues, including elder neglect and abuse at nursing homes. Recently, Congressman Sestak spoke at the Glen Riddle Senior Home and Rosemont Presbyterian Village to raise awareness of elder abuse and the need for strengthened protections and greater training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors dealing with cases of this nature.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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